

THE DEFINITION OF GENDER

In the early stages of the Elizabethan Age, feminist critics had to face a "fairly homogenous and privileged domain of male scholarship.

This dominance was justified by the definition of gender at that time, which granted more power to the males than females.

The way in which Shakespeare's contemporaries understood gender and the human body was primarily influenced by the model of a Greek physician called Galen in the second century AD. According to him, male and female sexual organs were structurally similar. What changed was the position of these organs, depending on the temperature in the body. So when men and women were believed to be basically the same, society needed other distinctive features like behaviour or clothing to differ between them. Society also believed that all males go through a transition during childhood where they are close to being female - called „effeminate" at that time - and then grow to an adult man. When a man still kept these female parts as an adult he was seen to remain effeminate. And when male and female elements were equally present in a human body, a "hermaphrodite" could be formed.

Another model which was developed by the humanist Erasmus describes men and women as persons „equal in virtue“. According to the model, equality results from their “common creation of God“, which is expressed in their “mental gifts“ (Turner 92). But he does not grant women the ability of moral choice or autonomy. They can sometimes share the authority with men but the male must “retain his authority at all times“.

So according to Galen and the Humanist Movement, men and women were physically the same but still men were in a higher, stronger position. Some early feminists attacked this categorization and proposed a social and sometimes even political equality between men and women of the same rank.

Many male writers of Shakespeare's period regarded gender as a sign of distinction, but still a man had more advantages than a woman could attain. So the Renaissance audience was delighted by stories of transformations - in social order, religion or language - and by cross-dressing.

The most important strategy, which occurs in many of Shakespeare's plays, was the one of disguise. Cross-dressing was highly controversial at the Elizabethan time, but still it was performed on stage.

A DEFINITION OF SEXUALITY

We all know what sex is. But sex is only a small part of who we are as sexual beings. Even people who are not having sex are sexual beings. And so there's another word that you should know and use too. That word is sexuality. Here are some of the things that are included when we talk about sexuality:

1. Sexuality is much more than body parts and sex (though it includes these things, too).
2. Sexuality includes our gender identity (the core sense that we are female or male).
3. Sexuality includes gender role (the idea of how we should behave because we are a female or male).
4. Sexuality includes our sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual).
5. Sexuality includes how we feel about our bodies. We call that “body image,” and poor body image can have a profound effect on our ability to have healthy relationships. A

person with poor body image may not think they deserve a good partner, and so they may be willing to settle for someone who will not respect them or who may even abuse them.

6. Sexuality includes our sexual experiences, thoughts, ideas, and fantasies.

7. Sexuality includes the way in which the media, family, friends, religion, age, life goals, and our self-esteem shape our sexual selves.

8. Sexuality includes how we experience intimacy, touch, love, compassion, joy, and sorrow.

9. We like this quote: "Sexuality is expressed in the way we speak, smile, stand, sit, dress, dance, laugh, and cry."

SEXUALITY AND GENDER AS SEEN BY SHAKESPEARE

Sexuality and gender are prominent themes in Shakespeare's plays. Depending on the genre of the play, sexuality and gender are used as either a tool of manipulation, a form of propaganda or sometimes both. During the time of Shakespeare, there was a social construct of gender and sexuality norms just as there are today. There was a hierarchy of sexes and each had their own role in society. Men were masculine, they were not ruled by emotion, and they were strong and hard working. Women belonged in the home, they were ruled by men and by their emotions and therefore were thought to often make bad decisions. By blurring the lines between sexuality and gender in his plays, Shakespeare deconstructs these norms to display their ambiguity. Masculine men can play effeminate women roles (which they did on stage) and effeminate women can play masculine men roles. Looking at both Richard III and As You Like It as major examples, I will show the different ways sexuality and gender are used to manipulate characters, alter the action of the play and deconstruct the social norm of gender and sexuality and how they vary depending on the genre of the play.

During the time when William Shakespeare was alive and writing, there were social norms about gender and sexuality that existed similarly as they do today. A major difference is that today there are feminist movements out to abolish gender inequality where as during Shakespeare's time, women were fully aware of their role in society and generally shared the same viewpoint as the men did.

Woman's place was within doors, her business domestic...Women...themselves accepted this divorce between the private (feminine) and public (masculine) sphere and, despite the recent precedents of Mary Queen of Scots, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth, they shared the age's distaste...for the notion of women's involvement in politics.

Shakespeare sought to defeat these norms, he sought to show that sexuality and gender are ambiguous and mutable. He could be viewed as a feminist in today's standards because of his attempt to deconstruct the unwritten rules about gender and sexuality in society. Many scholars question Shakespeare's sexuality and whether or not he had homoerotic tendencies based on some of his sonnets which are believed to have been written about men. Regardless, whether this is true or not we shall never know, however, we do know that he deconstructed the norm of gender and sexuality within his plays. The method he used to deconstruct sexuality and gender depended on the genre of the specific play.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY VIEW IN OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN Feminist Aesthetics of Nigerian Theatre Prominent among the various approaches adopted

by Nigerian playwrights in their representation of Feminism is Ola Rotimi's farcical cum comical approach in his play *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* (1977). In the early part of the play before the emergence of Lisa, Ola Rotimi presents a group of dumb, docile women who are rendered inactive not by an express command of the gods as in *The Gods are not to Blame*, but by a long period of subjugation under patriarchal culture that has made their oppressed state to look like a natural way of life. This group of women can be illustrated with Ola Rotimi's play

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again (1977) before the intervention of Liza in the play. The man of the family, Rahman Lejoka – Brown, is the god of his own household. His orders are as potent and as final as those of the gods. The ex-military-man-turned-politician prides himself as being more prudent than his father because he (Lekoja-Brown) acquires as many women as he can "handle" unlike his father who had a hundred and fifteen of them. In fact, he "handles" them as perfect as he does his other possessions. His is a traditional African family that is anchored in the culture of his people and the exigencies of the time. His marriage to the two wives at home is a testimony to his prudence. He acquires Mama Rashida, "a well-mannered, quiet, well-bred African pigeon" (p.9), from his late elder brother.

"Mama Rashida was the oldest of my late brother's wives", he explains to his friend Okonkwo, "My elder brother ... died in a train accident... my father ... had married her off to me!" (p.9). In addition to the "well-bred pigeon", he marries Sikira to meet the demands of his political ambition. Being in need of women's vote and realising that Sikira is the daughter of the president of the Nigerian Union of Market Women, Lejoka-Brown acquires her for electoral victory.

He has planned to settle her with money and send her away after the election.

Though they live together under the same roof as husband and wives, the man is far removed from his wives emotionally and otherwise, and this is evident in his relationship with them. His communication with the wives are mostly in the form of commands and orders to which they unreservedly respond "Yes, my Lord". The women have neither voice nor choice; neither ambition nor power and are completely dependent on their husband. Lejoka-Brown is their mouthpiece. The house is "peaceful" because patriarchy – that obnoxious belief that man must be-on-top of woman (whatever that phrase means) -- is maintained. The women are complacent about their subservient position. For them, it is a natural state. They do not agitate for another state because they are unaware of an alternative way of life for wives within a traditional family. It has to take someone from outside with a different way of life to rouse the women from their slumber, and Liza is the one.

Liza, a Kenyan lady, a medical doctor and the only one who Lejoka-Brown has married for love, is a different woman. Before she enters Lejoka-Brown's family, Lejoka-Brown is thoroughly agitated, feeling completely insecure. He confesses this to his friend Okonkwo when he said that,

Here I am, running up and down, renting a flat, getting restless, going crazy! Just because; .. I mean, I whose grandfather had a hundred and fifteen wives, ... one hundred plus ten plus five breathing wives all at once under his very roof! But here I am, with only two little crickets, expecting one more – just one more canary, and I can't just pick her up by the arm and say to her: 'woman I forgot to tell you; ... Here-meet your other ehm ... sisters-in-marriage! (p.28).

The fact emanating from this passage is that Lejoka-Brown is restless because he knows that Liza, the American-trained medical doctor, is a different woman from the “two little crickets” of wives in his family. At least she is not “a cricket” but “a canary”. Lejoka-Brown’s question “Liza take eye see Mama Rashida?” (p.30) to his servant Polycarp who runs to the airport to tell Lejoka that Lisa his wife who he is waiting for is already at his home confirms it. Why is Lejoka-Brown, the god of Lejoka-Brown family, agitated about Liza’s return? It is undeniably because Liza unlike the other wives is empowered by formal education.

She is trained as a medical personal with a Kenyan scholarship. Liza is therefore intelligent, powerful, independent and assertive. She knows what to say and how to achieve her aim. She is a totally different woman from Mama Rashida and Sikira. She is a symbol of an empowered, modern African (Nigeria) woman.

Even before getting the telegram informing him about Liza’s return, Lejoka-Brown has started making albeit bad and unnecessary adjustments to impress and accommodate her. He knows therefore that the high-handed, suppressive method he is using with the order two wives cannot be applied to the new woman. He starts to adjust both himself and his traditional family to accommodate her. “A man must measure up” (p. 29), he told his friend in the fit of his adjustment.

One of the important moves he makes in order to “measure up” is to dabble into politics in order to acquire some titles and positions that will enhance his social status so that his headship in his family is not tampered with. Lejoka-Brown’s attitude is a good example of patriarchal attitude – that which makes men believe that they must be on top of women in all things, especially in their relationship with their wife. This is believed to be a sure way of retaining one’s supremacy and authority at home. And feminism is against patriarchal attitude because of the unnecessary tension and strains it puts on the family as is seen in Lejoka-Brown’s family. It is the patriarchal attitude that for a man to be a man and for him to be on-top, he must “measure-up” with or out measure his wife that makes Lejoka-Brown to meddle in politics, marry Sikira and do many other things so as to measure up or “out measure” Liza with her degree in medicine. When his aspirant political position fails to draw from Liza the kind of attention he has hoped for, he becomes impatient. “After all, let’s face it,” he said, “I got into all this mess in order to make her feel proud” (p.28).

Liza’s presence in Lejoka-Brown’s house exposes the enslavement of the other women.

She has refused to be “doomed to becoming one of the three sacrificial slaves” in the “nauseating, clay-walled, gas-chamber” of a house, all in the name of a wife. Instead of keeping distance from the ‘slaves’ as Lejoka-Brown has planned, Liza mingles with them and tries to empower them in the best ways she could in the spirit of sisterhood. For instance, she helps Sikira (who she has thought to be a house girl and not a wife) to develop poise; teaches Polycarp, Lejoka-Brown’s servant, the skill of cage making and also shows Mama Rashida how to boost her petty trading to yield her higher profit. The fact that the women hold tenaciously to what they have learnt and have also started making use of them at once confirms the fact that they were in the subjugated position because they lack the knowledge of and the power to agitate for an alternative. In the end the traditional family breaks up because the husband fails to make necessary adjustments to accommodate the new women. Instead he uses violence and intimidation to force a new woman into an obnoxious old traditional family. His determination to resist change is seen when he addresses Liza:

Wife, it is too much indulgence that makes the she-goat grow a long beard like her

husband, the she goat ... Now, I'm no longer going to lie down forever... while you wipe your feet on all the moral standards I have set in this house!

He believes it is his sole right to set the standards and principles that dictate moral and social conducts: It is for the women's own to follow without question.

The comic-farcical method of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husbands* frustrates the feminist reading of the play. It is clear that the playwright's aim is to make fun of all feminist ideals. In his subtle way, he like some other Nigerian playwrights upholds patriarchy in the name of preserving cultural tradition. In using the comic-farcical approach to feminism, he trivialises its ideals. He achieves the ridiculing of feminist ideals by misrepresentation. He makes the ideals too confusingly ambiguous as to be objectionable.

The technique of using an American trained woman Liza to teach the ideals of freedom to African women in African society is wholly unacceptable to African feminists or "womanists". Liza can only but teach the western women's conception of emancipation which is ultimately the dissolution of the traditional family in order to establish a new one based on equality. For many African feminists, the traditional family is too central to our African communal way of life to be risked for anything.

Rather it favours a reformation of the traditional family to accommodate the changes of the modern era in establishing a just society based on gender equity. Also the method of tactically de-emphasizing the good aspects of Liza's ideology and deliberately emphasising its wrong application by the women is aimed at portraying the feminist ideals as irrelevant and bad. For example, the playwright represents Sikira as a thoughtless woman whose brain is too weak to accommodate certain truths. Immediately she regains her poise through Liza's lesson, her head becomes so swollen that she feels the family can no longer accommodate her. Instead of seeking a reformation of the old traditional family as Mama Rashida has done, she walks out to pursue her political ambition. Representations like that explained above seem to support the objectionable view that women's involvement in public life is injurious to the family. Yet Nigerian society is producing many Liz

The Symposium
Sort of like Socrates' version, but without the gay sex.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN MANDRAGOLA

In the *La Mandragola*, the plot revolves around Callimaco and his single-minded objective of having sex with Lucrezia, the young, beautiful married wife of a much older man named Nicia. The fairly standard (and I think non-controversial) interpretation of the play is that Lucrezia stands for the Italian principality, and the various characters' conspiracy to gain sexual access to Lucrezia as standing for political machination to control Italy.

Clearly, this interpretation of the play sees politics in explicitly gendered terms: political success, however conceived, is a woman. And inevitably the metaphors for achieving political success is couched in sexual terms. And the implication of this is that one must pursue political success like one would pursue a woman: with cunning, wiles, deception, and sometimes even force. This gendered view of politics is also evident in *The Prince*, because Machiavelli says that man must struggle against the goddess Fortuna, either through cunning, or with force. As he writes in *The Prince*, men must wrestle with Fortuna and force her into submission.

"It is better to be impetuous than cautious, because Fortuna is a woman and it is necessary, in order to keep her under, to beat and maul her... She more often lets herself be overcome

by men using such methods than by those who proceed coldly...therefore always, like a woman, she is the friend of young men, because they are less cautious, more spirited, and with more boldness master her.”

Again, it becomes very clear that for Machiavelli, politics is gendered. And this raises the question which I brought up at the beginning of the post: would it matter all that much for a woman to attain the highest political office if the way we talk about politics is still in very gendered terms I don't have a clear answer for this question, but what is clear to me is that HRC and her supporters talk about her campaign in these terms. HRC herself constantly speaks of herself as a fighter that never quits, tough enough to roll with the punches, and all these other kind of very masculine metaphors.

But I wonder if a woman's becoming the president is truly a substantive victory for women in general. If we really want to make gender a non-issue in politics, then perhaps we ought to re-think politics. It might be necessary that for this process to start, it must first be possible for a woman to attain the pinnacle of political success. But if we continue to think in terms of gender when we talk about politics, then how much have we moved beyond sexism?as.which shape Lucrezia's role, the importance of her desire, and the real situations which dictate that everything must be as it is. One of the most surprising details about the play is the relative silence of Lucrezia.

II. Niccolò La Mandragola : Unexpressed Desire Machiavelli, so infamous for his work of political theory, *Il Principe*, demonstrated his ability for understanding the deeper undercurrents of real situations. Rather than accepting the dynamics of life at a shallow level of cause and effect, he looks further into the realities surrounding him to understand underlying reasons which drive those causes and effects. Machiavelli was also a successful playwright of comedies. One in particular, *La Mandragola*, a story recounting a scheme involving various conspirators who concoct a ruse involving a supposedly deadly potion of Mandrake root, infidelity, and murder, all to allow for one man's sexual conquest of another man's wife, garners particular attention. It was, by all accounts, his most famous and successful play.

In fact, this play brought him more fame during his time than his political writings. In this play, we find Callimaco, a young man returning to Florence from France in order to find a woman of whom he has heard so much about, Lucrezia, wife of Niecea. His desire for this woman about whose beauty he has heard much drives him to enlist the help of a friend, Ligurio, in order to trick Niecea into allowing Callimaco to bed his wife Lucrezia. The play becomes increasingly more complicated and increasingly funny, but one thing remains prevalent, and that is the idea of desire. Throughout, the common theme is desire: Callimaco's desire for Lucrezia, Niecea's desire for a son, Ligurio's desire to laugh at the expense of Niecea, etc. All characters have desires which are explicitly stated, except for Lucrezia. My purpose then is to find what this desire is, and how this desire drives the action of the play.

Despite the centrality of the character to the plot of the work, she is rarely present, and when she is present, she rarely speaks unless spoken to. She first appears in Act III Scene 10, over half first. She first appears through the play, and in this scene, she appears with her mother who is attempting to convince her to participate in the mandrake plot. Sostrata has the first line, to which Lucrezia responds with doubts, before being somewhat dismissed by Sostrata who tells her, “Io non ti so dire tante cose, figliuola mia. Tu parlerai al frate, vedrai quello che ti dirà, e farai quello che tu dipoi sarai consigliata da

lui, da noi, da chi ti vuole bene” [I can’t explain all this to you, my dear. Speak to the friar, you will see what he tells you, and then you will do as you have been advised by him, by us, and by everyone who loves you] (consider the relative silence Lucrezia, but *Mandragola* 22023). We should here also the subtle dismissal of her words which serves as a mechanism of silencing as well to ask Michel Foucault calls us to examine who can and cannot speak and “how those who can and those who cannot speak...are distributed” (27). We see character silence, s be silent for the scheme, keeping secrets. However, Lucrezia, the wife who is spoken for, is silenced differently, silenced by the fact that others have the voices to speak for her. Lucrezia’s concerns, which is This correlates to Sostrata’s to do what she is advised by others response to , silencing her from even saying her opinions to herself, or at the very least being told not to follow her advice. In the context of Initiative and Resultant genderization, Lucrezia is being to assume a Resultant role, which, when combined with the lack of stage time and dialogue given to the character, it seems that her Initiative desires are not necessarily respected. This is not to say, however, that she does not have her own initiative desires. In this first speaking scene, she does state her doubts rather than simply submitting to the will of Sostrata. While these concerns are not respected, it must be noted that we do see that she has her own independent thoughts. Looking earlier in the work, we hear from Nicea a moment when Lucrezia demonstrated that sense of independence. When talking to Siro in Act II Scene Five, after attempting to have his wife produce a urine specimen, he describes her reluctance to do so, stating, “Quanta fatica ho io durata a fare che questa mia mona sciocca dia questo segno!...come io le vo’ far fare nulla, egli [what a job it was to get that silly woman to give me this è una storia ” urine!...whenever I try to do something about it, she gives me a hard time] (*Mandragola* 193, *Pocket Machiavelli* 447). This initially can be played off as simply a husband complaining about his wife, in a typical fashion for a comedy. After all, by this point Nicea has already been established as a bit of a fool, and the plot hinges largely on the supposed gullibility and foolishness of Nicea. Essentially, he is viewed as being so impotent, he cannot even get respect from his wife. The emphasis seems to be on Nicea’s lack, rather than on Lucrezia’s boldness. In another moment recounted by Nicea, we are told of a time when Lucrezia would go to Santa Annunziata. She had been told that if she were to go to the first Mass there for forty mornings, she would get pregnant. However, a friar began to approach her in such a way as to make Lucrezia decide to not return to the church anymore. It is insinuated that this friar was approaching her sexually, which in turn would most likely yield the result of getting her pregnant. This did not appeal to her, though, and she left. Here we again have a moment of Lucrezia asserting herself, but again it is painted in a way which avoids emphasizing the boldness of Lucrezia. In the first instance, with Nicea and the urine, the emphasis is on Nicea’s weakness as a man and husband, and Lucrezia’s boldness is ignored. In the situation with the friar, Lucrezia’s boldness in rebuking a man, a clergy member nonetheless, is ignored because it is done as part of a morally correct action. She was bold in order to protect her fidelity to her husband. Still, it should not be ignored that the audience is being given subtle hints about Lucrezia’s desires. What is seen is a demonstration of the bind between desire and expression. There is a recognition of the presence of desire in relation to Lucrezia, but a severe restriction in her expression or manifestation of her desire. Lucrezia has initiative desires, but is only allowed to verbalize those in certain situations, when they can be justified. Her

predominant initiative desire by the end of the play relates to having sexual partners aside from her husband Nicea. Callimaco directly states his desire to have an affair with a married woman to characters like Ligurio, but Lucrezia cannot simply say it. She must wait for the proper opportunity to arise which would allow her to express her desire without compromising her character or overstepping her restrictions.

CONCLUSION:

In the both plays there is a representation of gender, which distinguishes the treatment given to a male and female character, there is a stress to bring about gender equality, the women in the both plays are represented as being going through oppression from the male and still their voice are not heard or considered important. Also sexuality also dominates the play, as we notice the desires of sex, and how a man goes to any extent to satisfying his sexuality urge, sexuality is represented as a natural phenomenon which should not be questioned if it is moral or immoral. The characters are free to express their sexual desire because they can't change the fact about what they feel.